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NORTH WITCHFORD RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

A N N U A L R E P O R T

OF

THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

for the year ended

31st December 1957



ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

for the year ending 31st December, 1957.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES and GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present to you my report for the year 1957 on the health condition of your district during that period.

I also present the Public Health Inspector's report.

I have the honour to be, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

CECIL THOMAS,

Medical Officer of Health.

GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR HEALTH SERVICES

(1) Public Health Committee.

This comprises the whole Council.

(2) Public Health Officers.

Medical Officer of Health - CECIL THOMAS, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.
Public Health Inspector - JOHN METCALFE, M.R.S.H.

(3) Nursing in the Home.

The entire district has the services of Trained Nurses under the control of the Local Authority.

(4) Hospital.

Most patients are now treated at Doddington Hospital.

(5) Ambulance Facilities.

These are controlled by the County Council.

(6) Child Welfare.

Clinics are held at Doddington and Manca.


SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

The bulk of the adult population is engaged in agricultural work and there are a considerable number of small-holdings under the control of the Isle of Ely County Council. Agricultural work also provides seasonal employment for many of the female adult population.

GENERAL STATISTICS.

Area (acres)	26,088
Population (estimated mid year by Registrar General) ...	4,790
Number of inhabited houses	1,717
Rateable Value	£35,286
Estimated net product of a penny rate	£128

The estimated population is the same as that calculated for the previous year. The Census return in 1951 was 5,023.



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VITAL STATISTICS.

Table 1. Live Births:

	<u>M.</u>	<u>F.</u>	<u>Total.</u>
Legitimate	38	26	64
Illegitimate	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
	<u>39</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>67</u>

The birth rate for North Witchford Rural District in 1957 is 13.98 per 1,000 population, which is slightly less than that for the previous year (14.4 with 69 births) and still remains below the birth rate for England and Wales at 15.7 per 1,000 population.

Table 2. Still Births:

	<u>M.</u>	<u>F.</u>	<u>Total.</u>
Legitimate	1	-	1
Illegitimate	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1</u>
	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>

The still birth death rate per 1,000 live and still births for 1957 was 29.00 as compared with 14.28 for 1956. For England and Wales the figures were 22.4 and 23.00 respectively.

Table 3. Infantile Mortality:

There were 3 deaths of infants under one year of age (2 males and 1 female) and two of these deaths occurred under 4 weeks of age. The infantile mortality rate was 44.77 per 1,000 live births, as compared with 23.00 for the country as a whole.

Table 4. Deaths in Area and Causes:

	<u>M.</u>	<u>F.</u>	<u>Total.</u>
Tuberculosis, other than respiratory	-	1	1
Malignant neoplasm stomach	-	1	1
Malignant neoplasm breast	-	1	1
Other malignant and lymphatic neoplasms	4	1	5
Diabetes	1	1	2
Vascular lesions of nervous system	4	9	13
Coronary disease angina	6	-	6
Hypertension with heart disease	-	1	1
Other heart disease	2	1	3
Other circulatory disease	-	1	1
Influenza	1	-	1
Pneumonia	1	2	3
Hyperplasia of prostate	1	-	1
Congenital malformations	1	-	1
Other defined and ill-defined diseases	7	4	11
Accidents other than motor vehicle accidents	-	1	1
	<u>28</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>52</u>

The death rate for the Rural District in 1957 was 10.85 per 1,000 population compared with 11.5 for England and Wales. For the previous year the District death rate (with only 59 deaths) was 8.14 per 1,000 population as against 11.7 for the whole country.

NOTIFIABLE INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

	<u>Total Notified.</u>
Measles	196
Pneumonia	22
Scarlet Fever	2
Puerperal Pyrexia	1
Pulmonary Tuberculosis	6
Cervical Tuberculosis	1
Gastro-enteritis	1
	<u>229</u>

FOOD POISONING OUTBREAKS.

There were no notified outbreaks of food poisoning in the Rural District during 1957.

PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTOR'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR, 1957.

SANITARY INSPECTION OF THE AREA.

The following are the numbers of visits and inspections carried out during 1957.

Water Supply	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	39.
Drainage	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	60.
Fried Fish Shops..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	5.
Vans and Sheds	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	14.
Factories...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	14.
Bakehouses..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	5.
Sanitary Accommodation..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	59.
Refuse Dumps	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	7.
Rats and Mice (including premises visited by Rodent Operator)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	43.
Manure and Refuse Accumulations	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	10.
Miscellaneous Sanitary Visits.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	20.
Nightsoil Disposal	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	16.
Sewers and Sewage Disposal Works	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	82.
Dykes.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	62.
Building Byelaws..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	219.
New Drain and sewer inspections including tests.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	79.
Piggeries...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2.
Petroleum Installations.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4.

INSPECTION OF DWELLING HOUSES.

(1)	Number of houses inspected under Public Health Acts and Housing Consolidated Regulations (excluding Council Houses)...	...	...	...	...	...	...	36.
(2)	Number of houses surveyed for Slum Clearance (Not included in (1)).	...	...	...	...	...	...	23.
(3)	Number of Inspections for the above purpose (1) and (2)	...	...	...	...	...	...	140.
(4)	Number of Inspections of dirty and verminous houses...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4.
(5)	Number of Inspections and Visits to houses in connection with Improvement Grants	...	...	...	...	...	...	37.
(6)	Number of Visits to Council Houses - Repairs, maintenance, and complaints, etc.	...	...	...	...	...	...	687.

MEAT AND FOOD INSPECTION.

Butchers' Shops and Slaughterhouses.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	6.
Grocers' Shops	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	17.
Ice Cream Premises (Retail)...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	9.
Interviews and Meetings attended	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1314.

NOTICES SERVED.

Number of written Informal Notices served.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	23.
No. of above complied with	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	21.
Demolition Orders served	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	11.
No. of Closing Orders made	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	7.
Undertakings accepted under Section 11(3) of Housing Act, 1936	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	11.
Statutory Notices (Prevention of Damage by Pests Act, 1949) served and complied with...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1.

HOUSING.

30 new Council houses were erected in 1957 on the site already prepared at the rear of Westfield Road Council houses, Manca, the new estate being named Glebe Close. These new houses, together with 5 post-war aluminium prefabricated bungalows, drain to new sewage disposal works. The total number of dwellings erected by the Council since 1945 is now 197, this figure includes 15 prefabricated bungalows. In addition there are 84 pre-war houses. Owing to the absence of main drainage facilities it has not been possible to make any progress with the development of the additional housing site acquired at Benwick in 1956, with the result that slum clearance in that village is at a standstill.

During the year the Council accepted the offer extended by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in accordance with Circular 9/57 to purchase at £150. each the 15 aluminium prefabricated bungalows erected in 1947. The loan period is 15 years.

12 new dwellings were completed by private enterprise in 1957 and 4 more were under construction at the end of 1957. These included 3 second hand prefabricated bungalows on 10 year permits under Section 53 of the Public Health Act, 1936. In addition one new Police House was erected by the Isle of Ely County Council at Benwick, and a Drainage Authority erected one new bungalow in Wimblington Parish.

As regards Slum Clearance, the provision of the 30 new Council houses at Manca, enabled the Council to make some progress in rehousing a considerable number of families and secure the demolition, closing or reconditioning of the houses vacated. It was also possible to vacate the small Nissen hutted camp at School Lane, Manca, and clear the site ready for derequisitioning.

The following is a summary of the result of action taken in relation to unfit houses:-

Demolition Orders made in 1957	11
Closing " " " "	7
Undertakings not to relet houses until made fit	11
Houses demolished as result of Demolition Orders and other Statutory Action taken in or prior to 1957	10
Houses made fit and Undertakings cancelled	6

Repairs and improvements were carried out at 28 other houses as a result of inspections made independent of slum clearance surveys.

As in previous years, a considerable amount of time is taken up in dealing with repairs and maintenance (including external repainting) of Council houses and 687 calls at such houses were made during the year for this purpose.

IMPROVEMENT GRANTS.

Five applications for Improvement Grants were received during the year, all of which were approved. The total value of grants to be made amounted to £914. 11. 11. One of the properties was visited by a Sub-Committee and recommended for approval subject to the raising of ceiling heights. Two of the dwellings were for occupation by agricultural workers. 15 improvement schemes were completed during the year and a total sum of £3,884. 5. 3. paid out to applicants in respect of same. 37 inspections (including re-inspections) were made at premises in connection with improvement grants.

No application was received for Grant under Section 3 of the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act, 1938.

BUILDING BYELAWS.

71 plans were deposited with the Council under their Building Byelaws, all of which were approved. 219 inspections were made of premises in course of erection or alteration, etc. under the Byelaws. 79 inspections were made of new drains under construction, including smoke testing drains at 43 premises. The Building Byelaws operating in the Council's area are similar to the Model issued by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and came into operation on the 7th November, 1953.

WATER SUPPLY.

The Statutory Water Authority for the area is the Wisbech & District Water Board. 8 dwellings on the outskirts of the Rural District are served by Water Undertakings from other areas.

The following is the information supplied at the request of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government:-

(i) For the first time it is gratifying to report that there has been a plentiful supply of water throughout the area served by Board's mains and there have been no complaints as to quality other than an instance of an unpleasant taste in the water referred to in the report by the Chemist and Bacteriologist of the Board.

(ii) Normally routine independent sampling of piped water supplies is not carried out by the Council, as the Water Board's Chemist carries out frequent bacteriological examinations of the mains water at selected sampling points.

(iii) No action by the Council was necessary in respect of contamination.

(iv) The local supply of water is not plumbo-solvent.

(v) Proportion of dwelling houses supplied from public mains:-

<u>Parish.</u>	<u>No.of Houses as per rate book.</u>	<u>No.with mains water.</u>	<u>No.without mains water.</u>
Benwick	243	203	40
Doddington	486	422	64
Manea	507	438	69
Welches Dam	17	4	13
Wimblington	464	401	63
	<u>1717</u>	<u>1468</u>	<u>249</u>

For the following schedule of work carried out in North Witchford Rural District during 1957, and Water Analyses, I am indebted to Mr.J.K.Dawson, A.M.I.C.E., A.M.I.W.E., Water Engineer, and Mr.William D.Brighton, B.Sc.(Dunelm) Chemist and Bacteriologist, of the Wisbech & District Water Board:-

New Main Laid.

North Witchford Agricultural Extension
Scheme, Scheme No.N.W.6 Fifty Drove,
Manea

4" A.C. 1,192 yards.

Number of Premises Connected.

Benwick	3
Doddington	2
Manea	42
Stonea	9
Wimblington	11
	<u>67</u>

Water Analyses 1957, North Witchford Rural District.

"Frequent bacteriological examinations have again been made from samples taken in March, Doddington and Chatteris, of the piped supply to the parishes of Benwick, Doddington, Wimblington and Manea.

No contamination occurred during the year. A rather offensive taste was present for a short while, however, which was due to borehole contaminations at Marham. The taste was in no way harmful, and was removed by a treatment applied to the borehole.

Bacteriological examinations were made of every new length of main put into service, and none was passed for supply until the examination showed negative results.

Many chemical analyses were again performed on samples from source works and the distribution system."

	Number Taken	Number giving positive results	Number giving negative results	% Negative
Bact.samples at March	73	Nil	73	100%
Bact.samples at Doddington	52	Nil	52	100%
Bact.samples at Chatteris	106	Nil	106	100%
Totals	231	Nil	231	100%

As will be noted in the information given by the Water Engineer, a start was made on one of the Agricultural Water Main Extension schemes, namely N.W.6, which will bring an alternative water supply to Manea to augment the existing mains from Wimblington and Stonea before proceeding with extensions to other parts of Manea and Welches Dam.

Towards the end of the year, the Council agreed to put forward to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government a scheme for laying a 4" water main along the Forty Foot Bank from Swingbrow to Bettys Nose Farm and thence to link up with an existing main in Ramsey Road, Benwick.

DRAINAGE AND SEWERAGE.

Certain portions of the oldest built-up areas of Doddington, Wimblington and Manea are served by old combined storm water and foul sewers, all of which discharge into obsolete works or catchpits, and thence to dykes. It is not surprising therefore that considerable pollution by sewage matter occurs in such dykes, and in turn in the main drains forming part of the extensive land drainage system in the area, resulting in complaints from land users and Drainage Boards.

The village of Benwick has no proper foul sewers, although parts of the village are served by old surface water sewers, to which branch drains from yards of properties have been connected. A certain amount of domestic waste water is discharged untreated with surface water into the outfall dykes. Once again it is not possible to report any substantial progress with the proposed sewerage scheme for Benwick, but preparation of the revised scheme (which is estimated to cost £70,000) was completed and after consideration the Council approved the same and resolved to make application for grant aid under the Rural Water Supplies and Sewerage Acts, 1944-1955. Until a proper sewerage system is provided it is not possible to forge ahead with the Slum Clearance work or modernisation of existing properties in congested parts of the village. In addition, considerable embarrassment is being experienced with cesspool drainage at the post-war housing estate at Benwick.

The post-war housing estates at Wimblington and Manea have been equipped with modern sewage disposal plants, whilst the new housing estate at Doddington has a septic tank outfall connected with the filter beds forming part of the old sewage disposal works in the village.

During the year the Great Ouse River Board took samples of sewage effluent from various sewage outfalls at Manea, most of which produced very unsatisfactory results, consequently the Board requested the Council to proceed without delay with the preparation of a scheme for the effective treatment of the sewage from Manea. The Council agreed to appoint a part time Engineer to prepare a scheme for the village for submission to the Ministry.

A considerable amount of sewage dyke cleansing was carried out in 1957 at various outfalls at Manea, Wimblington and Doddington, in most cases dredging equipment was used and the cost shared with the land owners. One catchpit was provided on the outfall sewer at the western end of School Lane, Manea.

Drainage Disposal to such other houses as are provided with drainage systems is, in the main, by use of septic tanks, cesspools and soakwells, which function with varying degrees of success. A large number of houses particularly in Manea and Benwick, are provided with pail closets, and many other properties have vault closets.

PUBLIC CLEANSING.

Nightsoil is still collected by contractors, and in some cases composted with straw for use as manure on arable land, but some difficulty is experienced in finding satisfactory tipping points owing to the offensive smell. The contracts provide for three collections of closet pails per fortnight; the approximate number of closets being dealt with at the end of the year was 415. The cost of this service is heavy, which is easily understood considering the unpleasant nature of the task and consequent lack of competition. Further progress was made in the year in the conversion of pail and vault closets to water closets, as will be seen by the table overleaf, but no substantial reduction in the number of pail and vault closets will ensue until Benwick and Manea have adequate sewerage systems.

A scheme for converting pail closets to water closets with covered access at 24 old Council houses in Westfield Road, Manea, was approved in 1957 and the contract placed at the end of the year.

Closet conversions 1957.

<u>Village.</u>	<u>Improvement Grant Schemes.</u>	<u>Cessation of Nightsoil Collection.</u>	<u>Others.</u>	<u>Total Conversions.</u>
Benwick	2	-	1	3
Doddington	-	9	1	10
Manea	-	-	4	4
Stonea	3	-	4	7
Wimblington	-	2	-	2
	<u>5</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>26</u>

Cesspools and vaults are emptied upon request from occupiers by one of the Contractors, who uses a cesspool emptier for this purpose. The contents are either discharged over arable land or disposed at the nightsoil tipping points.

Tins and indestructible household refuse are collected in built up areas at monthly intervals by contract, employing the kerbside method. Disposal is effected in disused gravel pits, where the refuse is periodically covered with soil specially carted to the site. Unfortunately these sites are open to all-comers and a certain amount of indiscriminate tipping occurs which makes it difficult and expensive to cover the entire tipping face with soil. The refuse contractors carried out their duties very satisfactorily during the year under review.

MILK SUPPLY.

The Rural District of North Witchford was made a "designated area" by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food in 1956. The bulk of the milk supply is distributed by two firms operating from dairies situated outside the Council's area and supplementary licences were issued to these firms under the Milk (Special Designation) Regulations, 1949 to 1954, as follows:-

Supplementary Licences:	Pasteurised	...	...	...	2
	Tuberculin Tested	...	...	...	2
	Tuberculin Tested (Pasteurised)	...	...	...	1
	Sterilised	...	...	...	1

In addition there is one other retailer covering part of the area who retails bottled designated milk obtained from one of the principal retailers. This retailer was granted a Dealer's Licence.

MEAT AND OTHER FOOD INSPECTION.

There are only 3 slaughterhouses licensed in the Rural District under Section 63 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1955, the licences of which all expire on 16th September, 1958. These slaughterhouses are rarely used except for occasional casualties and a few pigs killed for private consumption. No animals intended for sale for human consumption were killed in the above slaughterhouses in 1957. The six butchers who have shops in the District have nearly all their animals slaughtered in the neighbouring Urban District.

FOOD PREMISES.

(i). The number of food premises in the area is as follows:-

Grocer and general provision stores	...	...	20
Confectioners only	...	...	2
Butchers...	...	...	6
Bakers	...	...	4
Greengrocer only	...	...	1
Fried Fish Shops	...	...	6
Cafes	...	...	2

(ii). 14 premises are registered under Section 16 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1955, for the sale of ice cream. No ice cream is manufactured in the area and all the retailers sell prepacked ice cream, which in every case is stored in proper refrigerator cabinets. There are no Dairies in the District.

(iii). 9 inspections of registered food premises were made during the year.

(iv). No new educational activity was undertaken during the year.

(v). Condemned tinstuffs are normally disposed of by burial at the refuse dumps. Rejected meat is either removed for disposal by burial or in the case of whole carcasses coloured with appropriate dye prior to removal by Knacker man.

(vi). No examination of whole consignments of food was necessary.

(vii). There are no ice cream manufacturers in the area.

(viii). An abstract of the provisions of the new Food Hygiene Regulations 1955/1956 has been distributed to all food premises in the district. 23 visits were made to food premises during the year. Byelaws for handling food were adopted by the Council in 1951 under Section 15 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1938.

MOVEABLE DWELLINGS.

There are no large caravan sites in the area. Eleven licences were issued under Section 269 of the Public Health Act, 1936, authorising the use of caravans for a limited period on individual sites. A licence was refused in respect of one application on the grounds that the size and type of accommodation was insufficient for the family concerned. Periodical inspections are made to ensure observance of sanitary requirements.

RODENT CONTROL.

Comparatively few complaints have been received regarding infestation generally, and these have all been dealt with. The various sewage dykes and refuse tips are treated regularly by the Council's employee. The Pest Department of the Isle of Ely County Agricultural Executive Committee carry out a considerable amount of rat destruction in the area, having contracts for the treatment of over 100 premises. One notice was served under Section 4 of the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act, 1949, in respect of premises infested with rats.

FACTORIES ACTS, 1937 AND 1948.

1. Inspections

	Number on Register.	Number of	
		Inspections.	Written Notices.
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are enforced by the Local Authority	5	6	-
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority	20	13	1
Total	25	19	1

The written notice was in respect of unsatisfactory sanitary accommodation at one factory. No outworkers are employed in the area.

J. METCALFE,

Public Health Inspector.

